David Steele Murdoch

and

Mary Emily Van Wagenen

David Steele Murdoch was born May 31, 1872, in Heber, Utah. He was the fourteenth child and the youngest son in the family of fifteen children of John Murray and Ann Steel Murdoch. John and Ann and their parents came to Utah with the Mormon pioneers.

His Early Life

David's adult life reflected the rich experience of his early boyhood and young manhood. His earliest days in a loving family gave him a sensitive appreciation and affection for people. He loved and was loved by others, and soon learned that he was among people who wanted him. This gave him a feeling of confidence in the goodness of life and an understanding and appreciation of others. He spent most of his childhood on a ranch north of Heber City in an area now known as Keetley. David's father had a co-op sheep herd so took care of other farmers herds part of the time.

Being the youngest son, he enjoyed some uncommon privileges, and on occasion was chided as being a favorite child. He loved to be constantly with his parents, and through ingenious ways found methods of being with them, especially on trips or journeys of any kind. He had such love for his mother; many times he would follow her when she would go as a midwife, night or day, and stay on the porch until she would go home.

By sharing the common experiences of his family and neighbors, he learned to feel at home on the farm and stock ranch. There was plenty of work for him to do. Without shoes, he herded sheep over the fields and hills, for shoes for children in those days were mostly a Sunday affair. During his early days he developed a love for good horses and later owned teams and racers that were the pride of him and his family. In pursuing useful work, his mind and body developed without major tension and stress. This helped him to place important things first and to keep his mind uncluttered with minor problems and frustrations. Throughout his life, his children and their children could feel a steadiness coming from his stability and serenity. He was lovingly known as "Papa" to all of us.

David was an attractive man, a typical Scotch type, short of stature, happy, sociable, and friendly. As he matured and sought independent work, his interests were in the fields of construction, livestock, and mining. One of the

buildings on which he worked that is still standing is the white brick hotel at the Homestead Resort at Midway. He also built the first home of his own, a red brick structure that is still standing.

In his boyhood he learned to play as well as to work. He took special interest in baseball, fishing, and hunting. The love of these sports stayed with him throughout his life and was transmitted to his sons, who shared with him many happy hours in the mountains and streams of Utah.

Courtship and Marriage

Myth and reality are hard to separate in stories and David's courtship and marriage. There seems to have been no scarcity of girl friends. From bobsleigh riding, dancing, and other parties he found recreation and associations which led him from everyday affection to love and marriage. Finally the apple of his eye became Emily Van Wagenen, a dark-eyed community beauty and musician who soon took his entire interest and attention. After a courtship (not to be discussed in this document), they were happily married on October 21, 1891. The marriage ceremony was performed by Bishop John H. Van Wagenen, father of the bride, and was later solemnized in the Salt Lake Endowment house in 1894. His selection of a wife proved to be his wisest decision of his life. Throughout her married life Emily was an outstanding wife and mother. Her sterling quality made her an appropriate teammate in the high achievements that were to come in their family life.

To this new family unit happiness was to be born from the early sorrow occasioned by the loss of their first three children. In those days it must have been difficult to see the joy that was to follow as eleven additional sons and daughters were to come and bless their home.

During their early married life David and Emily found both pleasures and sobriety in flavoring their vocational lives with church and community recreation and music. At first David took up mining, becoming mine superintendent over a period of years. Then he returned to merchandising in which he operated general merchandising stores first in Midway and then in Heber during the period 1900 to 1914.

Their lives were not completely channeled in their occupations, but were richly flavored with music and church activities and recreation. They knew how to enjoy life in their family and community. As musicians in demand, they organized and managed the Murdoch Orchestra. This orchestra was well known in the Wasatch and Provo valleys in the succeeding forty years. Emily played the piano and David the violin. Highly active in their wards and stakes, David and Emily freely furnished orchestra music for benefit dances and entertainments. Through his priesthood activities he became a high priest in the Church, holding many important positions.

Papa played the guitar and sang. After he and Mother

were married she taught him the fingering scale of the violin, which was the beginning of a real career in the music world. He had a wonderful ear for music and was able to play the violin by ear for over forty-five years in their fine orchestra. Mother played the piano and was somtimes assisted by Minnie and Atha and other members of the family. Ray played the saxophone. The Murdoch Orchestra was a very popular band. This was where we all acquired the desire to play and sing. These times were a wonderful part of our lives as a family. Many happy times were spent in our home at 188 North and Third West in Provo. Dancing, singing ,and eating were the main events. Many people would pass by and stop to enjoy the music and the fun times we were having. Papa and Mama were always happiest when we were all having fun together.

Provo Period 1914-1950

November, 1914, when the family moved to Provo, opened a significant chapter in the David Murdoch family history. To be anticipated was the earning of a livelihood for a family of eleven with two more to follow. In Provo, David took up the distribution of produce and poultry and supplemented that income with the earnings from the orchestra. During the thirty-three year period 1917-1950, the family home was on the corner of 188 North and Third West in Provo. By this time the family was complete with the two youngest children added. The days and years were filled with satisfaction and the daily fortunes of family life. The eleven children in the family were: Aritha, Ervan, Minnie, Eva, Lillie, Atha, Chloe, Ray, Ethel, Velda, and Emmitt. In this home there were no dull moments; every member had his part to play and some overplayed their parts.

By the time each son and daughter had found his life's companion, the procession of grandchildren had started--each one as welcome as the first. The family home seemed to bulge at the seams. There were very few days when some married branch of the family had not returned for a visit. There were family programs with each branch competing in talent shows; there was jovial conversation, music, and with the close of the day's work, each evening there was a family reunion.

Among all the rolls played by David and Emily Murdoch none exceeded in joy and satisfaction that of grandparents. In this they found sheer delight; deeply in love with all members, they never evidenced any partiality. Throughout their lives the family spirit was "all for one and one for all."

David's later life was saddened by the long illness and passing of his loved companion on March 31, 1943. David passed away eight years later on October 1, 1950. Their posterity at the date of this writing numbers 328, May 31, 1980.

David Steele and Mary Emily Van Wagenen Murdoch and Daughters
Back Row: Chloe, Lillie, Ethel, Eva, and Aritha
Front Row: Velda, David S., Mary Emily V., and Atha

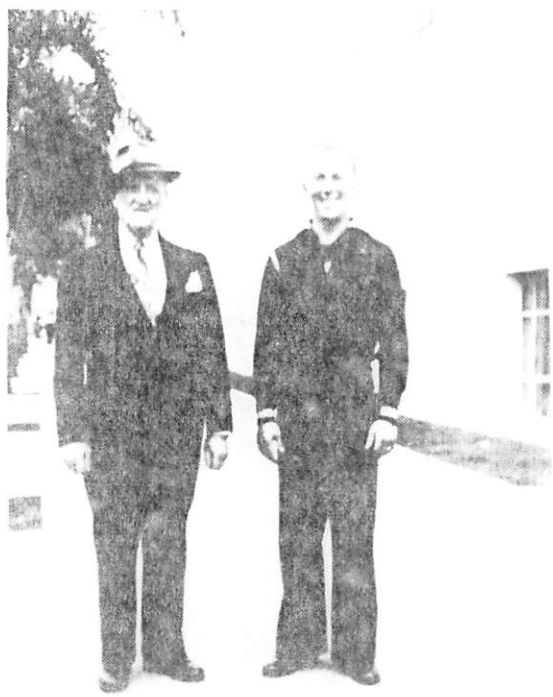
David S. Murdoch family home
188 N. 300 W. Provo, Utah

David S. Murdoch and brother
Thomas Todd Murdoch

David Steele Murdoch

Mary Emily Van Wagenen

David S. and Mary Emily W. Murdoch
August 1938



David Steele Murdoch and Son - Emmitt